

Publication Date: 17 April 2025

YSP Podcast Transcript: 446 - Strata Repair Costs Set to Skyrocket Under NCC 2025

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Intro: Welcome to Your Strata Property, the podcast for property owners looking for reliable, accurate, and bite-sized information from an experienced and authoritative source.

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome to this week's podcast episode. I'm your host, strata lawyer, Amanda Farmer. And my guests this week are Helen Kowal and Deborah Lockart. Helen Kowal is a partner at Swaab and has a legal career spanning over 30 years. In the past 15 years, specialising in building construction, strata and property.

Helen has been heavily involved in legislation relating to strata renewal under Part 10 of the Strata Schemes Development Act and more recently the Design and Building Practitioners Act. As a member of the ACRA National Advocacy Committee and New South Wales Subcommittee, Helen has been dealing with the impact of the Design and Building Practitioners Act and its reform on the strata remedial industry. And ACRA, that's ACRA stands for Australasian Concrete Repair and Remedial Building Association.

Deborah Lockart is Manager, Risk and Compliance at RHM Consultants. She's responsible for the development of quality systems and the company's legislative compliance. RHM provides engineering and building diagnostic services to the strata property management and legal sectors.

Deborah is the ACRA National Advocacy Lead and New South Wales Vice President. She's been a member on numerous government working groups representing the strata remedial industry since 2021. Over the last nine years, Deborah has focused on legislative compliance, quality systems and HR. She herself is an owner in Strata and has been the treasurer of a large owners corporation for 10 years. She brings her expertise and passion for people systems compliance and representing the common good.

Now I invited Helen and Deborah onto the show to share with all of us an incredibly important message about some reform that is being proposed to the National Construction Code. NCC 2025 is on the agenda with significant impacts for those of us who live, own and manage strata buildings right across the country to share with us what these impacts are and why you need to be listening. I'll take you over to Deborah and Helen.

Deborah Lockart and Helen Kowal, welcome to the show.

Helen Kowal: Thank you, Amanda.

Deborah Lockart: Thank you, Amanda.

Amanda Farmer: Deb, your focus is on regulatory change and compliance within RHM, which is a strata engineering company. Helen, you're a Strata lawyer. So tell me, why do you each devote so much of your time to assisting ACRA with its advocacy work?

Deborah Lockart: So, passion. Yes, I'm very passionate about many things, but what I'm really passionate about is strata remedial. So I bring them all together because they do go together. So RHM Consultants, the company I work with, they're a member of this group called ACRA and I think it's really important, probably, Amanda, that we say, who is ACRA? So they're the Australasian Concrete Repair and Remedial Building Association. My company's a member of that. And I've then got involved in the various committees. I'm on the state committee. And then now, for the last four years, I've been leading the advocacy side of things.

I've lived in strata for 30 years, probably that's my most passionate thing. I have owned in strata for 10 years. I've been on a strata committee for 10 years. And then the other funny thing is that I've actually worked in the remedial industry for 9 years now, so they just go together. And I just see the amazing advocacy work that we've achieved in the last 4 years is something that really drives me.

And I'm absolutely committed, working with ACRA as we resolve some of these unintended consequences. So that's my passion.



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Amanda Farmer: Nice, Helen.

Helen Kowal: Thanks, Deb. Thanks, Amanda. As you know, strata lawyer, in the past 15 years of specialising in construction and strata, I've seen a lot of owners impacted by very severe building defects in their buildings. So when the construction reform was announced back in 2019, I sort of went, "Oh, great, keen to see the quality of buildings improve and for owners to benefit from the regulatory change."

When it became apparent that the changes had many unintended consequences for the remedial industry, and then I was approached by the ACRA advocacy team that had been set up. I was keen to join them and consult with the government to try and work through these unintended consequences with government. I got drawn in and I've never left. We've still got a lot to do and, yes, the work continues.

Deborah Lockart: There is just one thing I wanted to add on behalf of our work with acris, and what does really please me is that ACRA is about better regulation, better regulation of our industry. And it's really nice to be at the table talking about that and what that looks like. So that's really important, being at the table.

Amanda Farmer: And I guess, Helen, 2019-2025, maybe you didn't think you'd be 6 years in and still trying to resolve the unintended consequences of this reform. That just keeps coming.

Helen Kowal: Yes. Yes. The consequences do keep coming, Amanda, and we have done a lot of work. We've made significant inroads to trying to work through those unintended consequences for the industry. But we've hit another wall and we've got to work through it again.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, well, that's what I want to talk to you both about today, that wall that you are hitting and what we can do to help break through it. It's all about the NCC, the National Construction Code proposed, new, revised. You let me know what you're calling it. NCC 2025. Why is the NCC being revised? Is this a normal thing that happens every few years?

Helen Kowal: Yes, it is, Amanda. The revision isn't out of the ordinary. The NCC is revised every 3 years. The NCC sets the minimum standards for building work, and the Australian Building Codes Board revises that standard every 3 years and then the states choose to adopt it in their state.

Amanda Farmer: Okay, so that was one of my questions. We're talking about a National Construction Code, am I right, that everything we're going to talk about today applies to everyone living, working, serving strata across the country? This is not just a New South Wales thing. Those who are tuning in, keep your ears pricked up regardless where you are, if I got that right?

Deborah Lockart and Helen Kowal: Yes, that's right.

Deborah Lockart: I think, because we are talking nationally, but we have been focusing on New South Wales. And I think it's really important for people listening from a national point of view is that each state and territory can actually choose to adopt the NCC to whatever level and provide exemptions in whatever way that state or territory chooses to.

So it's not just all taken on board across Australia. It depends on the state and territory as to how much they. Either they delay it further or whether they adopt it at 100%, whether they provide exclusions or exemptions for different people, like the remedial industry.

And it depends on the legislation in that state at the time as to what they can work with in bringing any change. Would that be what you would agree with, Helen?

Helen Kowal: Yes, that's right. Yes.

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Amanda Farmer: Okay. We might come back to that when we're talking about the lobbying work that ACRA is doing and exactly who you're lobbying and what you hope to achieve. Can you just explain for us what the NCC 2025 is proposing in terms of waterproofing and watershedding provisions, those being some technical construction terms there. That is what I understand is what is most concerning to our strata schemes. Let's talk about what those proposed changes are in NCC 2025.

Deborah Lockart: This is a really technical question and I want people to know totally. I am not an engineer, although I work for an engineering company. I'm not a design practitioner. So I'm going to explain it in a way that creates a picture for people to even begin to understand ACRA. I led a national consultation process in relation to the response to the proposed NCC 2025 and happy to share that with you, Amanda, and you can distribute it. But it actually does go technically into the absolute, every provision and all the detail as to how we cannot comply with those provisions. But probably what I want to say, well, how's it different? Okay. It's sort of like for the remedial industry currently under the NCC 2022, we can work to exempt development.

Now, I'm hoping your listeners will understand that we do not need planning approval. We don't do our projects under a development application. We don't necessarily do them under a complying development certificate. So in the main, because there are some projects needing planning approval, but in the main we can meet this recipe and do our projects on your buildings as exempt development. Does that make sense?

Amanda Farmer: Got it. So somebody's got waterproofing problem, leaky balcony, remedial engineer can go in, help them get that fixed. Local council doesn't have to get involved.

Deborah Lockart: Correct.

What changes? Possibly if we can't bring change ourselves with the NCC, the proposed NCC provisions on waterproofing and watershedding. So we're not talking the whole NCC 2025, we're coming into that section. We're talking about waterproofing and watershedding. Basically what happens is that the recipe changes for us, for the remedial industry and we can't work to that recipe.

And that means we have to come up with other solutions to fix that balcony. And by doing that we actually; So now I'm really talking about New South Wales because I can't speak to other pieces of legislation around Australia. I will need to be doing that. But we're focusing on New South Wales right now. What that means is because we can't work to the recipe, we're having to get planning approval. Because we're having to find other ways that are different to the recipe to fix that waterproofing on that balcony. So we need approval. So whether it's a development application or a complying development certificate.

Amanda Farmer: So to me, as a layperson in this area, I'm not an engineer, I hear this as, "Well. I think you're telling me the standard of work is changing and where maybe engineers and contractors could get away with fixing my balcony in a certain way that didn't need council approval."

Now, the NCC 2025 proposed is saying they have to do work in a different way. Is that a more detailed way? Is that a better way? Is that a safer way? Is that a more effective way? And therefore they need council approval. Isn't that a good thing? I'm thinking.

Helen Kowal: The issue is that the NCC 2025 provisions relating to waterproofing and watershedding, many remedial building aren't existing. Buildings are not constructed in a way that allows practitioners to actually comply with the provisions. So you might have an existing building that doesn't allow you to achieve falls that are now going to be required in the NCC 2025. So that is the problem. We just cannot comply because the building structure does not allow us to.

So therefore we have to come up with performance solutions, other solutions to fix the problem, to make sure that we meet the standards in some other way. And we'll discuss performance solutions a little more later. But the issue is that that triggers planning approval.

Amanda Farmer: Got it.

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Deborah Lockart: So we want to work the way we always do. And this particular NCC paper that I'm referring you to, it's going to use magical words which we're trying not to jump into in this conversation. It'll talk about deemed satisfy provisions, it'll talk about potential performance. It does performance solutions, it will talk about falls, it'll talk about screed like it will talk about all these things like we know about it.

But right now we just want to keep it really simple in not getting confusing because this is a 4 year conversation we've had. It's very, very technical. And I just think the paper that I've written and we wrote last year and submitted to the board that oversees the NCC 2025, that really goes into the finer detail and explains there's a lovely one page cover page on that as to why we just can't comply with this. And we have to find other ways to do that, which is we do need a development application and CDC because of the state based legislation.

Amanda Farmer: Okay, so this code or revision of the code, am I right then that it was written for new buildings and that's the reason why it doesn't work with existing or older buildings? Is that the roadblock we're facing here?

Deborah Lockart: That is what we are positing, that is our understanding.

Amanda Farmer: Okay.

Deborah Lockart: And our preference.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, well there you took the words out of my mouth, Deb. You said our preference. So isn't it an easy solution that this should not apply to existing class 2 being multi-storey apartment buildings?

Helen Kowal That is the easy answer, yes.

Amanda Farmer: Okay. And look, I don't want to steal anybody's thunder because we're going to get into what your recommendations are, but let's dig a little deeper on these impacts. If the NCC is amended in this way to require our existing strata buildings to meet these more detailed requirements. Let's play it out. What should our strata owners, residents, strata managers expect? How will a balcony remedial works project look different from the same project that might be happening now?

Deborah Lockart I might take that one first, if you don't mind, Helen. So in the last month we, ACRA were invited to meet with the Building Commissioner in New South Wales with James Sherrard, and a big question he had to ask us, which I really appreciated because that prompted the paper that we've shared with you, Amanda, and what we're talking about today.

James wanted to know, how is the proposed NCC waterproofing and watershedding provisions? How does this impact owners? And I thought that is a really good question. I can't just walk into a meeting and say, "Oh, prices are going up and there'll be time delays in projects." I needed to workshop that. So Design Practitioner Tom Mackay, he's an advocacy team member. There are 5 of us in ACRA on this team. Three design practitioners, a lawyer and myself from RHM Consultants. We sat down over a week and a half and then through contribution of our advocacy team, we wrote a paper. So this paper looked at the impact of the proposed NCC 2025. What is the impact on owners? We really wanted to be able to share with James exactly what that impact is, other than increases in prices. That's meaningless without some figures.

So our paper actually looks at and love happy for you to share this wherever you want, Amanda, because this is written looking at specifically owners and how this impacts owners, so it will increase prices. So what we've done is case studies. We took a case study approach. There are three.

So the first case study that Tom and I looked at was basically what is happening now? So what is happening now is working well. So the remedial industry, we've worked out over the last 4 years how to work with the NCC 2022 and what came hand in hand with that was the Design and Building Practitioners Act. So we've run for a consultation process with Mapp Press leading that from the Building Commission or then Fair Trading.

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For 4 years we have navigated some pretty difficult unintended consequences and we have resolved a lot of issues under that model, generally our industry. Now I'm getting a bit technical, so do stop me in my tracks, Amanda, if that gets the case, we can generally work to deem to satisfy, which means we can work to the recipe.

Now, that project we're saying, let's say it's \$55,000. Case study 1 \$55,000. Under the current rules that we're working to now, case study two, we've moved into. Okay, if the NCC 2025 fully comes in and the remedial industry has to comply 100% if it does with that, what does that mean? Okay, your project may need a development application, or depending on your building, how tall it is and all these things, how many stories there are, it may need a complying development certificate.

So either one of the two, and it will be quite clear a planning consultant will determine that. But we looked at both cases. So you've got this balcony, you're having it waterproofed and you've got a sliding door and you're taking that out, you're putting a new one in. And we said, "Oy, under these current situation, it's 55,000." The cost for case study 2, which needs a debt, where we applied, a development application, that cost is around \$200,000.

Amanda Farmer: Just because it needs a DA?

Deborah Lockart: That's right, because. And this paper, there's an appendice where I itemise all the figures to actually evidence how we get that number. It's not just a magical number that I've created. I work extensively with planning consultants and I consulted extensively in checking my numbers here. So the project sort of costs the same, but it's all the planning, all the construction certificates, all the specialists, the practitioners who come in and out and the certifier or the council, the people who come in and out of that DA process.

Now that's the cost, the time frame that applies to this in our paper. We've got 56 weeks. That's the lead time to get your development application, your consent, your CC consent. Sorry, now I'm talking a lot of planning stuff, sorry, your construction certificate, when that gets approved, you may need up to one year before you go through all of those steps to even start your project.

Amanda Farmer: While your balcony is leaking.

Deborah Lockart: Correct.

Helen Kowal: Yes. That's actually a good lead in to what I was going to say. Amanda. The other expected cost for owners and owners corporations is obviously the right of an owner under section 106 of the Strata Schemes Management Act to bring a claim for foreseeable loss and damage arising out of an owner's corporation's failure to maintain and repair common property. So if you've got a lot owner who's in, who can't live in their apartment because of a leak, may not be able to rent it out because of a leak, then they're able to bring a claim for that loss and damage if the owners corporation is proven to have breached their duty to maintain and repair that common property.

So if we're talking delays, that delay will obviously increase. If we have to go down the planning approval pathway, the delays will be longer, the losses will be higher. The legislation's just changed so that the lot owners can bring a claim for that loss and damage for up to 6 years after they become aware of the loss, rather than 2 years. The defences that were formerly available to owners corporations have changed.

So we're yet to see the impact of the recent, very recent changes to the legislation in respect of what the owners corporation can delay reasonably in repairing those works. So that's just another added potential cost on top of the actual project costs that an owners corporation may be facing.

Amanda Farmer: For sure. And I could just see a situation where the tribunal is determining an application A to do work B to meet these losses. And the Tribunal may turn around, as they often do, and say, and this work needs to be complete within 6 months, this work needs to be complete within 42 days, even. What I mean, then as lawyers going to have to be explaining to the Tribunal,

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that's just not possible anymore to do work that quickly.

Helen Kowal: Yes, that's right. And it's very difficult to explain to the tribunal why it's going to take so much longer in the current state of affairs. Yes.

Deborah Lockart: I don't want to be doom and all doom and gloom because I am passionate and I am pretty confident that we once. Well, we've identified this unintended consequence and we will move forward and I'll be very shocked if this actually comes into play. This stays as it is. We've done really huge consultations in the last 4 years. We've worked massively well with the building commission and it's just important that we communicate the unintended consequences now to resolve it before it comes in. That's the beauty of this.

Here and now, the third case study, and you're talking about time. So literally the third case study looks at, okay, if we need to do a complying development certificate for that same balcony sliding door, that same project, again, the dollar figures around \$200,000. The significant difference is the time frame. So a CDC is a fast track, but by 6 months. So we sort of said, okay, that's going to take 6 months to get that approval through before you can start that project, which might take only 6 weeks.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, so. And as Helen says in all that time, possibly paying someone's lost rent, temporary accommodation costs. They're both reasonably foreseeable losses under our strata legislation. I want to come back to, you know, we're talking about these being unintended consequences. I want to just, you know, our audience is silent here. Pipe up for the devil's advocate.

Can you tell me, and I suppose, Deb, this is a question for you again, putting a hand up saying, got no engineering experience, but in your advocacy position, are you saying to government, we can repair a defect in a leaky balcony to precisely the same standard or to the same effect with the same results, without these performance solutions and sticking with the deemed to satisfy, which is what we've been doing for the last four years. There's just no benefit here. Or is there an argument that these performance solutions are necessary to get remedial works right?

Deborah Lockart: That is a really. That's a very good question. It's a very technical question. If you do deem, if you work to the recipe, that is a guaranteed way of getting it right. I'm just going to really, really broadly answer that question and welcome Helen if she wants to add anything else.

But if we are working to deem to satisfy provisions, that means there's this recipe and people are following it. That is the good rule book, right?

A performance solution or a deemed satisfied solution, whatever any other solution there is to be made that doesn't fit that recipe, it's got to be proven. And Helen has talked about this over our 4 years of our consultation process about tested solutions. And Amanda, you're probably well aware of those. You know, we haven't had to work to prepare solutions that are different from the recipe generally.

So in the last, under NCC 2022, the remedial industry, we've committed to working to that recipe. So to work outside the recipe, it's about coming up with the solution in the first instance to then know and guarantee that that will be doing what it's supposed to be doing, that is stopping water leaking into someone's home. I don't know. Is that sort of touching upon your question, Amanda?

Amanda Farmer: Yes, I think I get it. It's a premature question. Perhaps we don't know what we're going to have to come up with. And until we do, we don't know whether that's going to be more effective or less effective or the same.

Deborah Lockart: And the industry will work with government on that, but we don't have an answer for that right now.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, good point.

Helen Kowal: I think my comments there, Amanda, are that at the moment, we're working under the DBP, so we have a process where regulated designs are needed to be prepared by qualified and registered design practitioners. Those designs are signed off

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as declared to be compliant with the Building Code of Australia. So, as Deb said, in most cases that would be the deemed satisfied.

If we have to go down the planning approval path, we have a second layer of regulatory compliance. So we're already being regulated by the dbp. Building practitioners have to build in accordance with the regulated designs. The Building Commissioner has powers to enforce orders against builders if they don't do the right thing. So effectively we're looking at introducing a certifier level and having a second layer of regulation. Is that going to make the work any better?

Amanda Farmer: Yes. And here we go back to. Is this a particularly New South Wales concern, then? Because the DBP is not national. The Design and Building Practitioners Act, other states. You tell me where I'm wrong, Helen, but don't have this legislation or may have a different version of this legislation. I'm not sure. So are these changes in the NCC, at least when it comes to their impact on Class 2 apartment buildings, are they directed to solving these problems in other states? That New South Wales can put its hand up and say, we already solved these problems with the DBP.

We're already paying more for our balconies to be fixed and have been for the last 4 years because of the DBP. Now you're going to throw this on top of us as well, just because it's good for the other states, not our problem. Is that kind of the New South Wales position?

Helen Kowal: Yes. Yes, it is, Amanda. I mean, effectively, New South Wales has led the charge with this construction reform and we are already being regulated and significant change has happened over the last 4 years because of that. So a lot more regulation is happening. A lot more power has been given to the Building Commission to issue stop work orders, issue enforcement notices, et cetera. So New South Wales is already being regulated and the question begs that, is it needed for that extra level?

Deborah Lockart: And, Amanda, what builds upon that? So we've, as an advocacy, because we represent nationally, we have decided to really focus on New South Wales because we've spent four years working with the Building Commission and we really get it. We've identified unintended consequences before. We have our own unique legislation. We know where that's got to change.

But I think perhaps the onerous layer for other states may not be as detailed as we have here in New South Wales. There still will be a consequence nationally but that just depends on the other bits of legislation that they have in their states and territories as to whether certifiers are permitted to have room to make decisions on remedial work, whether they comply or not, it really depends on state and territory level. But we are right now really focused on New South Wales in working with the Building Commission in resolving this issue because of the layers that do apply.

Amanda Farmer: Got it. So what is your advice to Strata Committees who may be planning remedial works now, especially work involving waterproofing? Given this uncertainty in our regulatory environment, what do you say they should be doing?

Deborah Lockart: Can I give my personal. This is personal experience. Helen can then give her legal advice or whatever that means. No legal advice on this show. No. No legal advice. Well, her personal opinion then, Deb. So, yes, certainly me being on a strata committee for 10 years and a treasurer and having done a big remedial project myself, you know, I know people don't like spending money. They don't want to be paying for someone else's roof or balcony. But really, I think what's really important that the strata committee focuses on getting good people and advising them that the owners corporation.

So, number one, sorry, get moving on your remediation works, don't delay. But how do you not delay? You have to give credible information to your owners. People need to make a vote. People may have to save money, people need to contribute higher extra levies. It's just really important that you do your due diligence, that you get all the details you need, that owners feel empowered that they're actually making a decision based on good information.

And then I'm hoping for owners and owners corporations, you can start your project sooner than later. You know, we've seen in the

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last 5 years, Amanda, prices going up from our resourcing to labour, you know, so the CPI going up projects are just increasing in cost. And I really, I am distressed about this because I do see it in my day job, every day, owners delaying because of the cost of the project.

It's just going to increase and your building will deteriorate. You know, you don't fix something, it will just continue to get worse and the problem will get bigger. So I'd say do your best and get going on it now. Employ the right people, do your due diligence, save some money, have a good capital fund. You really need to prioritise the maintenance and repair of your building.

Helen Kowal: Yes, I tend to agree with Deb and my personal view is that you can't delay in undertaking these projects. You have owners living in buildings that are leaking and it's their homes, they need to be able to live in a safe and amenable condition in their apartments. So strata committees obviously have obligations under the Strata Schemes Management Act. Those obligations are increasing, as you would well know, Amanda. So they need to take the lead and ensure that the owners corporation are engaging the right people to give them advice and just get the work done.

Yes, that is going to bear costs for owners, but the whole aim of this reform has been to have better buildings. And long term owners need to maintain their buildings, they can't just let them crumble around them. So they do need to take steps. We're trying to make those steps as relatively simple as we can and less costly. But yes, those steps need to be taken.

Amanda Farmer: So we've talked about this a little bit and I've thrown at you, you know, isn't one of these solutions just to exempt existing Class 2 buildings from these NCC requirements. What are you going to government with? If you were designing a regulation that strikes the right balance between safety and performance. And not punishing owners with cost and delay, what would it look like? What are you advocating for? At the end of the day?

Deborah Lockart: What I'm trying to do as the lead of advocacy is focus on New South Wales, get an agreed resolution and then that will then have an impact and flow to other states and territories. Because we've got a really good communication and consultation process already in place with the Building Commission. We're not establishing who you know, and whatever. We've already had multiple working groups so we're just, we're continuing the conversation, which is very powerful and meaningful which I hope then will go elsewhere.

So New South Wales. So we're currently preparing a consensus statement with the paper, the consultation paper that's been distributed and is going into many places. What are we driving for? We are seeking a consultation process led by the Building Commission. I'm confident that will occur but it's important for me that every stakeholder actually understands the issue.

What's been happening in the last 4 years? You know, we've been leading a very big technical conversation and it's really time now that owners, and that's why we're here today and strata managers actually understand what it means. And I've tried to avoid technical words, but it's really important that strata managers and owners corporations all come together to understand what we've been doing ACRA for the last 4 years in ensuring that the unintended consequences are resolved so that we can apply better regulation to the industry, get better buildings. So we want a Building Commission led consultation process and what we want to do.

And we wrote a paper last year, again, Amanda, I need to share that with you. That was in May 2024. We did a working group paper. So that's a co- government and remedial industry paper. So the Building Commission and ACRA co signed a working paper. And that paper, some high level considerations were. And they're still the same.

We are asking and this, you know, this is probably will happen. I mean it's the only way, I think it can happen to review the planning legislation. And that magical thing is called the Code SEP. So this magical code is the state environmental planning policy. So it's. This code under the planning legislation is where we can bring an amendment to observe the unintended consequences on the remedial industry and say, "Hey, this part of the NCC does not apply to the remedial industry. They've got to achieve this, they've got to do that." It sort of sets the rules and the parameters around how deeply it impacts or the unintended consequences impact our industry.

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So that's the first one. Review the planning legislation, bring in the planning department, bring in all the key stakeholders to talk about what is the best way to amend that piece of legislation. The other thing, and Helen has talked a bit about this in this podcast in New South Wales, ACRA agrees, the remedial industry agrees that the Design and Building Practitioners Act has given a really good level of regulation of our industry. It has really moved for better regulation and we support that.

And we've been wondering, and in our paper consideration too, it talks about the potential of the DBP under the Building Bill. You know, that's all changing too. But the DBP actually being the main regulatory piece of legislation regulating our industry, so that we're not, as Helen talked about before, having this planning legislation here, DBP, the remedial industry strata, is sort of trying to streamline who regulates what and to minimise the unintended consequences.

Helen Kowal: Yes. So as I've said, and Deb said, the regulation under the DBP should be sufficient in our view. It does what it's intended to do. If we can get the planning legislation amended, perhaps some minor changes to the DBP regulations to reflect how it's all going to work. and what works are and are not included under the DBP, then we shouldn't have to have that level of planning certification as well.

One of the aims that we're asking for is for a transitional period for the remedial industry, for the NCC 2025, to allow time for us, if it's going to come in, to allow time for the remedial industry to work through it with government. And try and get the appropriate changes in place.

Amanda Farmer: You've mentioned there that now's the time to be bringing this to the attention of owners on the ground, in the building, rather. Strata managers, what is it that they can do to support you in your advocacy? How do they connect with you? Get on a mailing list, be ready, send their stories. What would you like our listeners to do to support you?

Deborah Lockart: Thanks, Amanda, for that opportunity. What owners? For me, for ACRA, what's really important is for owners to actually understand this issue, to read about it, be aware of it. So really, for me, this is, as the advocacy lead, an awareness piece. Owners need to appreciate and understand. It's very complex, it's very technical, and why these changes are happening.

So how do you keep up with this? May I suggest to people listening in and for further broadcasting, Acra has a LinkedIn profile. Follow LinkedIn and you might get sick of various. Oh, we're doing this webinar. We're doing this course because that's what we do. We educate, train.

Amanda Farmer: That's okay. This audience is used to all that. They get a lot of invitations to education here.

Deborah Lockart: Good. But this is a simple one. Follow us on LinkedIn. Go to our ACRA website. You have to look carefully, you know, to find where our newsletters are. But we do a national newsletter, I believe. I didn't get a chance to check that. The morning that you can actually register to receive our newsletter, I write an advocacy piece where I provide an update on what we're doing, our work with the government, our presentations.

Matt Press attended one of our main meetings. Over 120 people attended, where we talked about all of this work. It's really important for owners to stay up to date and know what's happening and to get a sense of the progress we're making. Because we will make progress, but it's important for owners to really understand what's going on in the background and certainly, obviously, speak up when you need to. Yes, so that's my suggestions,

Helen Kowal: Deb, we've also got the consensus paper that we're issuing. We've had a lot of support come through in the last few weeks from various industry organisations, companies, associations who are all jumping on board. So ACRA will be issuing a consensus paper to gather momentum to put to the government to try and push for some attention and some change to happen.

Deborah Lockart: And so with this consensus statement, it's really important to have organisations become signatories to this. So that's a flow on from the paper that you've seen, Amanda, and last week I was in Sydney and I'm not going to name individuals because I don't think that's right or companies or I have met with strata managers, strata management, companies, organisations,

Publication Date: 17 April 2025
YSP Podcast Transcript: 446 - Strata Repair Costs Set to Skyrocket Under NCC 2025

certainly OCN. Well and truly, Helen and I in particular have been working with OCN for at least 4 years. We've done lots of webinars, workshops and things like that.

We've equally done the same with Mapp Press in presenting to SCA, to OCN. So Owners Strata, they are definitely on board and absolutely, I am of the strong view after last week, owners will be represented through strata managers, definitely and obviously with OCN.

Amanda Farmer: Excellent. Well, we will make sure that in the show notes for this episode we have all of the relevant links, including to Accra's LinkedIn page, Accra's website, the papers, Deb, that you've shared with me and if you've got any updates to share, please do.

We'll make sure that we have all of that available to our listeners who are individual owners are also managers in large management companies who are part of industry associations and advocacy groups themselves. So please do reach out to ACRA if you think that you are one of these people Deb's talking about, that can be a part of this consensus paper.

Thank you both for being here, for sharing your time, once again volunteering your time to share this important message. I asked you at the top why you've been involved with ACRA for all of these years. You shared your thoughts. Neither of you said that it's because you are good human beings. I think you are both good human beings.

Deborah Lockart: I am. Thank you, Amanda.

Amanda Farmer: And we're lucky to have you. Lucky to have you. It is all volunteers. It's your own time. You're also involved in your own businesses and have your day to day lives and work to get on with. If we didn't have you there leading the charge. Gosh, I feel a little bit ill about where we could possibly end up.

Deborah Lockart: Another word I use, which I didn't, is we do this for the common good.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Deborah Lockart: And that's why my employer backs me and is happy for me to disappear for a few days. Oh, I'm going to Wollongong with Matt Press. I'm doing this. I'm heading up to Newcastle because they've got a compliance thing on. "No problem, Deb." And it's about, yes, my employer saying, Deb, this is fantastic because it's for everybody. We're doing this.

Amanda Farmer: Thank you for being here and sharing that, and let's drum up some more support for you.

Helen Kowal: Thanks, Amanda.

Deborah Lockart: Thank you. It's good to be here. See you.

Amanda Farmer: Bye for now.

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